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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Letter dated 9 March 1995 from the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights

I have the honour to transmit herewith the reply by the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia concerning the address made by the representative of Bulgaria at the fifty-first session of the Commission on Human Rights on 6 March 1995, and to request you kindly to circulate this letter and its annex as an official document of the fifty-first session of the Commission on Human Rights under item 12.

(Signed) Vladimir Pavicevic

Reply to the statement of the Bulgarian representative at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights

The statement made by the Bulgarian Ambassador at the fifty-first session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights on the position of the Bulgarian national minority in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is a flagrant example of distorting the factual situation, abounding in falsehoods and unsubstantiated allegations.

In the many direct contacts held between the competent bodies of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria in the recent period, continuous efforts of the Bulgarian side aimed at the comprehensive development of good-neighbourly relations and the settlement of problems through bilateral agreements have been evident. On no occasion during these meetings has Bulgaria raised the problem of the position of the Bulgarian minority which, it had been apprised, was properly resolved, in terms of regulations as well as in terms of everyday life. Hence, the statement made by the Bulgarian representative, whereby "many efforts to settle the problem with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on a bilateral level have failed", raises astonishment. It is evident that this statement by the Bulgarian representative is but a segment of an orchestrated action aimed at pressurizing the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on the issue of the alleged violation of the rights of the minorities.

One can only wonder at the moral rights of the representative of Bulgaria for having initiated this issue, even though it is well known that under its 1991 Constitution, Bulgaria itself is defined as a unitary State. Under the Constitution of Bulgaria the immense Turkish, Macedonian, Romanian, Armenian, Serbian and other minorities are not recognized as such. A State which denies the existence of minorities in its territory is not entitled to give lessons to others concerning minority rights, particularly not to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, where this issue is being regulated, even beyond the standards envisaged by relevant international documents, under the constitutions of its respective republics and under the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia itself. On no grounds can Bulgaria urge its neighbours to provide rights for the members of its minority in those countries while it is reluctant to recognize the very rights of the members of the national minorities in its own territory.

Granting that the statement of the Bulgarian representative and his enlisting the politically-motivated campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia are within the "new approach of the democratic Bulgaria to human rights", Bulgaria should then provide a comparative review of the rights the members of its minority are granted in other neighbouring countries as well.

Bulgaria should confirm its alleged interest in a long-term establishment of stable and good-neighbourly relations with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia by rejecting its policy of double standards.

On this occasion, again, we wish to stress that there is no case of violation of the Bulgarian minority members' rights. Again, the Bulgarian representative claims, with no foundation, that the members of the Bulgarian minority in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia have been denied "the right to express their ethnic identity, and the right to use their language, to freely develop their national and cultural traditions". According to the population

census of 1991, the members of the Bulgarian national minority make up 0.2 per cent of the total population of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (26,922 persons have declared themselves Bulgarians). Even though it is obvious that this minority is very small indeed, it enjoys the same rights as other, much more numerous minorities in the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Albanian or Hungarian, for example).

Let's take the field of education where, in the communes with predominantly Bulgarian national minority, there are 4 elementary schools with 2,210 pupils (Dimitrovgrad, Bosiljgrad, Babusnica and Klisura). The instruction in these schools is bilingual, with intensive, in-depth teaching of the Bulgarian language and culture. Ninety-three per cent of those employed in the elementary school in Dimitrovgrad, including its principal, are members of the Bulgarian national minority.

There are 2 high schools operating in Dimitrovgrad and Bosilgrad, attended by 600 students - members of the Bulgarian national minority. Over 90 per cent of those employed in the Dimitrovgrad school, including its principal, are members of the Bulgarian national minority. As for the school building itself, it is among the most modern high school buildings in the country and the Republic of Serbia has invested large sums of money in its construction.

There is a Bulgarian language department at the Faculty of Philology of Belgrade University, with a professor of Bulgarian nationality heading it.

Culture Centres of Dimitrovgrad and Bosilgrad are promoting the national culture and traditions of the members of the Bulgarian minority in varied sections: folklore, dances, music and poetry. The same is the case with the 2 culture and arts ensembles, "Georgi Dimitrov" (in Dimitrovgrad, with 73 members) and "Mladost" (Bosilgrad, with 85 members). The "Hristo Botev" amateur theatre in the Bulgarian language has been active for 106 years, with some 30 members at present. The city library of Dimitrovgrad stores some 30,000 volumes in Bulgarian, with the Bosilgrad library having 14,000 books in the Bulgarian language.

Publishing activities in Bulgarian have been conducted by the "Bratstvo" publishing house of Nis, founded in 1959, which issues the journal Bratstvo (Brotherhood), a magazine for literature, the arts, sciences and social issues, Most (the Bridge) and a children's magazine, Drugarce. TV Serbia has a 15-minute daily broadcast (30 minutes on Sundays) in Bulgarian.

All the above testifies to the fact that the accusations made by the Bulgarian representative are extremely arbitrary and unfounded slanders.

The members of the Bulgarian minority are of the same Christian Orthodox faith as the majority population of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It is well known that the service in Orthodox churches is rendered in the Old Slavic Church language, which makes the allegations that the members of the Bulgarian minority are deprived of their right to profess their faith in their own language blatantly without foundation. Such accusations, coupled with the demands to have priests from Bulgaria, are obviously directed at a totally different target.

Such an approach by Bulgaria is yet another confirmation that, even nowadays, this country has not renounced its aspirations towards the segments of

the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which are being claimed and labelled as its "western provinces", in contravention of Bulgaria's declared policy towards the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Such a policy is the extreme opposite of the OSCE Final Document and the principles on the respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other States enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. We therefore anticipate that the international community will notify Bulgaria of the disadvantages of such a policy and to point to its possible adverse consequences.

In conclusion, we wish to emphasize once again that such an attitude on the part of Bulgaria renders no guarantee of its genuine intentions to promote its relations with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Such a policy is detrimental to overall Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations, and to the stability in the region.

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